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Islamization of sports

Dr. Zubair Zafar Khan

This research paper is a humble attempt to study the Islamization of sports in the modern age. In order to discuss it, first there provide a concise survey of the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) in recreation and sports. The Prophet ^(S.A.W) himself had a good sense of humor. Sometimes he used to joke with his companions. He also had fun with children and advised his companions to behave with children entertainingly. In addition he was an excellent sportsman. He was an skilled equestrian, swimmer, wrestler and racer. For this paper data has been collected from the *Ahadith* of the authentic *Hadith* collections only. It will also highlight the challenges faced by Muslim sportsmen these days. In the end, some attempts of Islamization of sports in the modern age have been discussed in brief.

Introduction

Islam is the final and complete form of religion or way of life, chosen by Allah for the salvation of Humankind in both the worlds. It not only fulfills spiritual needs but also provides physical fulfillments to Humankind. It is designed in such a way that if a Muslim seeks to live a perfect life, in any era of Human history, whether it is the era of camels or the era of ultra sophisticated technology, it can guide man successfully and not to look upon any other way of life. Since, recreation and sports are the natural requirement of a healthy human body and a civilized society. How then could we think it possible that Islam overlook this natural requirement and have no guidelines at all in it? From the life of Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W)¹, we have adequate amount of teachings where he not

only permitted recreation and sports, but also encouraged his *Ummah* with participating in some sports. Narrated Jabir bin Abdullah: *The Prophet (S.A.W) said, enjoying all, that is lawful is Sadqah.* (Bukhari)² Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was himself a good sportsman and took keen interest in it. He was a good horseman, swimmer, wrestler and racer, in which he showed a talented and skilled behavior. *Sahabah* also enjoyed and encouraged sports. Hazrat Umar bin Al-Khattab said, *teach your children swimming, archery and Horse riding.*³ Hazrat Ali bin Abi Talib said: *"Refresh your minds from time to time, for a tired mind becomes blind".*⁴ Hazrat Abu Darda also said: *"I entertain my heart with something trivial in order to make it stronger in the service of the Truth".*⁵

Sense of Humor

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was a very gentle and loving person. With all the severity and seriousness of his function, his company was neither boring nor dull or uninteresting, like that of most ordinary religious leaders, but was full of pleasant and charming humor.

It is reported by some of the companions that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) used to mix with them on familiar terms, even to the extent of enjoying light jokes with them. *An Arab said that he had seen no one more pleasant and smiling than Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).*⁶ Another Arab says, *"After I accepted Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) never prohibited me from attending his assemblies. Whenever he saw me he smiled or laughed".*⁷

The following are a few examples that show Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) sense of humor.

(1) *An ugly old black Bedouin man was selling his merchandises in the market. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) approached him from behind and clasping his arms around the Bedouin man, challenged him to release himself from the grip.*

Then the Prophet (S.A.W) called to those who passed by, 'Who wants to buy this slave?' Laughing and still in the Prophet's (S.A.W) grip, the Bedouin man responded, 'There is no market for me. Nobody would want to buy me,' because his old, deformed body made him unattractive. The Prophet (S.A.W) replied, 'But by Allah, you are priceless and invaluable'.⁸

(2) It is narrated that a person requested Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) that he be given a conveyance. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) replied, "The baby of a camel shall be given to you." The person said, "What shall I do with the baby of a camel O' Messenger (S.A.W) of Allah?" (I want one for conveyance). The Prophet (S.A.W) replied, smiling, "Every camel is the baby of a camel".⁹

(3) A woman came to the Prophet (S.A.W) gouching about her husband. The Prophet (S.A.W) asked her, "isn't your husband the one whose eyes are white (which means in Arabic literature 'blind')?" The woman then feared and said, "No, he is not." Then, she immediately went back to her husband and started looking at his eyes. Her husband felt strange. He asked her, "What wrong with you? Weren't you upset with me just an hour ago"?¹⁰

She narrated to him the incident with Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and they realized how he solved the problem between them by re-motivating the love between them in this gentle and truthful way.

(4) Also, it is narrated that an old woman came to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and made a request, "O' Messenger (S.A.W) of Allah pray for me that Allah grants me entrance into Paradise." The Prophet (S.A.W) replied, "O' Mother, an old woman cannot enter Paradise." That woman started crying and began to leave. The Prophet (S.A.W) then said, "Say to the woman that one will not enter in a state of old age, but Allah will make all the women of Paradise young virgins. Allah says, "Lo! We

*have created them a (new) creation and made them virgins, lovers, equal in age”.*¹¹

However, in joking one should not speak lie because Islam prohibits speaking lie even in jokes. In a *Hadith* the Prophet (S.A.W) said, *“I will joke, but I only speak the truth. It is not lawful for a Muslim to frighten his brother. Do not dispute with your brother, not joke with him in mocking terms. Shame on him who speaks lies in order to entertain others. One cannot be a good believer until he ceases to tell lies, even in jest, and to dispute, even if he is in the right. Do not speak lies, even in jest”.* (Bukhari)¹²

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) playing with children

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) also played with children, especially with his two maternal grandsons, Hasan and Husayn. The Prophet (S.A.W) allowed his grandsons to climb atop his back while he was in prostration as reported by al-Hafid Abu-Na'im on the Authority of Abu Bakr saying: *“The Messenger (S.A.W) of Allah was leading us in prayer. Hasan, who was still a child, would come to him while he was in prostration, and sit on his back or sometimes on his neck. The Prophet (S.A.W) would lift him tenderly. When the prayer was finished, they (the Muslims) asked him: ‘O Messenger (S.A.W) of Allah! You are doing to this boy what you do not do to another person?’ ‘He is my basil,’ he replied”.*¹³

In another Hadith: *Narrated Al-Bara: I saw the Prophet (S.A.W) carrying Hasan on his shoulder an saying, “O Allah! I love him, so please love him”.* (Bukhari)¹⁴

Narrated Usama bin Zaid: Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) used to put me on (one of) his thighs and put Al-hasan bin 'Ali on his other thigh, and then embrace us and say, “O Allah! Please be Merciful to them, as I am merciful to them”. (Bukhari)¹⁵

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) advised his companions to be merciful to children. *Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) kissed Al-hasan bin Ali while Al-Aqra' bin Habis At-Tamim was sitting beside him. Al-Aqra said, "I have ten children and I have never kissed anyone of them," Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) cast a look at him and said, "Whoever is not merciful to others will not be treated mercifully". (Bukhari)¹⁶*

Singing and Music

Usually it is understood that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) severely prohibited Music and Singing. To some extent, it is true but many traditions reveal that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) permitted and enjoyed Music and singing in certain circumstances. For example:

1. *Narrated Aisha: Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) came to my house while two girls were singing beside me the songs of Buath (a story about the war between the two tribes of the Ansar, the Khazraj and the Aus, before Islam). The Prophet (S.A.W) lay down and turned his face to the other side. Then Abu Bakr came and spoke to me harshly saying, "Musical instruments of Satan near the Prophet (S.A.W)?" Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) turned his face towards him and said, "Leave them." When Abu Bakr became inattentive, I signalled to those girls to go out and they left. It was the day of 'Id, and the Black people were playing with shields and spears; so either I requested the Prophet (S.A.W) or he asked me whether I would like to see the display. I replied in the affirmative. Then the Prophet (S.A.W) made me stand behind him and my cheek was touching his cheek and he was saying, "Carry on! O Bani Arfida," till I got tired. The Prophet (S.A.W) asked me, "Are you satisfied (Is that sufficient for you)?" I replied in the affirmative and he told me to leave. (Bukhari)¹⁷*

2. *Narrated 'Aisha: That during the Mina days, Abu Bakr came to her, while there were two girls with her, beating*

drums, and the Prophet ^(S.A.W) was (lying) covering himself with his garment. Abu Bakr rebuked the two girls, but the Prophet ^(S.A.W) uncovered his face and said, "O Abu Bakr! Leave them, for these are the days of Id (festival)." Those days were the days of Mina-. 'Aisha added, "I was being screened by the Prophet ^(S.A.W) while I was watching the Ethiopians playing in the Mosque. 'Umar rebuked them, but the Prophet ^(S.A.W) said, "Leave them, O Bani Arfida! Play. (for) you are safe". (Bukhari)¹⁸

The above traditions reflect that, Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) permitted singing and music, but it was a very light kind of music. Those girls were only beating drums and singing in the home of Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W). Scholars extract some results from these traditions as to what kind of Music and Singing is permitted in Islam. They are as follows:

1. The text of poetry used for singing must not be romantic. It is romantic poetry, which Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) prohibited severely. All traditions in which Prophet ^(S.A.W) made harsh comments on poetry, related to romantic poetry or anti-Islamic poetry. Narrated ibn Umar, the Prophet ^(S.A.W) said, "It is better for a man to fill the inside of his body with pus than to fill it with poetry". (Bukhari)¹⁹
2. The Music instruments should be very light and simple. It is not permitted to use expensive and luxurious Music instruments.
3. The singing girls were below adult age.
4. It is not permitted to listen to singing adult woman accept *mehram*.²⁰
5. If a man enjoys singing and dance of his *mehram*, then her voice should not be so loud that, so as that outsiders can listen to it.

Poetry

Poetry was one of the widely accepted forms of recreation among the Arabs. More than a mode of entertainment, it turned as addiction in Arabs. Despite wide spread illiteracy, Arabs were great poets and everyone poor or rich had a good taste and natural skill in poetry. That is why they called non-Arabs as *Ajamis* (dumbs). However, Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) generally discouraged poetry because most of the Arabs consumed most of their time in this worthless task. It was the requirement of the time to stop Muslims from this worthless task, because this was the formative period of Islam; and Muslims had to do a lot of constructive works. However Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) admired fine poetry. Narrated Ubai bin Ka'b: Allah's Apostle ^(S.A.W) said, "*Some poetry contains wisdom*". (Bukhari)²¹

Therefore, we find that many Muslim poets have contributed in terms of spiritual wisdom and expression of truth of reality by their poetry. Jalaluddin Rumi, Hafiz, Amir Khusroo, Allama Iqbal, Jami, Attar, Omar Khayyam, Iraqi, Ibn Arabi, Mahmud Shabistari, Al Hallaj, Yunus Emre, Saadi are some famous poets. They have given birth to the finest forms of poetry in human history.

Below are mentioned some narrations regarding poetry:

1. *Amr ibn Al-Sharid mentions a report by his father who says: "I was riding behind the Prophet ^(S.A.W) on the same mount when the Prophet ^(S.A.W) asked me: 'Did you memorize any poetry by Umayyah ibn Abi Al-Salt?' When I answered in the affirmative, he asked me to recite. I quoted one line, and he asked for more. He kept asking for more until I had recited one hundred lines". (Bukhari) and (Muslim)²²*

2. *The Prophet ^(S.A.W) ordered a moat to be dug outside Madinah, to deny the attacking army easy entry. The Prophet ^(S.A.W) shared in digging it like everyone else, because the task had to be completed within a short period of time. Engaged in this great effort, the Prophet's ^(S.A.W) companions chanted a rhyme, "Had it not been for God's grace, we would not have*

known His guidance, and we would have neither given charity nor prayed. Our Lord! Grant us serenity in this difficult time, and steady our footsteps should we engage our enemy in battle. It is the other party that is the aggressor; but we will never yield to their persecution." As they repeated this rhyme, the Prophet ^(S.A.W) would raise his voice twice repeating its last word, *abayna*, which means "we will never yield." But this was not the only rhyme the Prophet's ^(S.A.W) companions chanted as they were digging the moat. Another one repeated particularly by the Ansar may be translated as follows: "We are the ones who have given firm pledges to Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) that we will strive for God's cause as long as we live." The Prophet ^(S.A.W) answered them with rhyming phrases, but not in prose, saying: "The only true life is that of the hereafter. My Lord, grant your bounty to the Ansar and the Muhajireen". (Bukhari) and (Muslim) and (Musnad Ahmad)

3. Narrated Anas: When the Prophet ^(S.A.W) arrived in Medina he dismounted at 'Awali-i-Medina amongst a tribe called Banu 'Amr bin 'Auf. He stayed there for fourteen nights. Then he sent for Bani An-Najjar and they came armed with their swords. I saw the Prophet ^(S.A.W) sitting over his *Rahila* (Mount) with Abu Bakr riding behind him and all Banu An-Najjar around him till he dismounted at the courtyard of Abu Aiyub's house. The Prophet ^(S.A.W) loved to pray wherever the time for the prayer was due even at sheep-folds. Later on he ordered that a mosque should be built and sent for some people of Banu-An-Najjar and said, "O Banu An-Najjar! Suggest to me the price of this (walled) piece of land of yours." They replied, "No! By Allah! We do not demand its price except from Allah." Anas added: There were graves of pagans in it and some of it was unlevelled and there were some date-palm trees in it. The Prophet ^(S.A.W) ordered that the graves of the pagans be dug out and the unlevelled land be levelled and the date-palm trees be cut down . (So all that was done). They aligned these cut date-

palm trees towards the Qibla of the mosque (as a wall) and they also built two stone side-walls (of the mosque). His companions brought the stones while reciting some poetic verses. The Prophet (S.A.W) was with them and he kept on saying, "There is no goodness except that of the Hereafter, O Allah! So please forgive the Ansars and the emigrants". (Bukhari)²³

4. Narrated Jundub: *While the Prophet (S.A.W) was walking, a stone hit his foot and stumbled and his toe was injured. He then (quoting a poetic verse) said, "You are not more than a toe which cutted off. (Bukhari)²⁴*

5. Narrated Abu Huraira: *The Prophet (S.A.W) said, "The most true words said by a poet was the words of Labid." He said, Verily, Everything except Allah is perishable and Umaiya bin As-Salt was about to be a Muslim (but he did not embrace Islam). (Bukhari)²⁵*

6. Narrated Sa'id bin Al-Musaiyab: *'Umar came to the Mosque while Hassan was reciting a poem. ('Umar disapproved of that). On that Hassan said, "I used to recite poetry in this very Mosque in the presence of one (i.e. the Prophet (S.A.W)) who was better than you." Then he turned towards Abu Huraira and said (to him), "I ask you by Allah, did you hear Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) saying (to me), "Retort on my behalf. O Allah! Support him (i.e. Hassan) with the Holy Spirit?" Abu Huraira said, "Yes". (Bukhari)²⁶*

7. Narrated 'Aisha: *Once hassan bin Thabit asked the permission of the Prophet (S.A.W) to lampoon (i.e. compose satirical poetry defaming) the infidels. The Prophet (S.A.W) said, "What about the fact that I have common descent with them?" Hassan replied, "I shall take you out of them as a hair is taken out of dough." Narrated 'Urwa: I started abusing Hassan in front of 'Aisha, whereupon she said. "Don't abuse him, for he used to defend the Prophet (S.A.W) (with his poetry)". (Bukhari)²⁷*

Sports

Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) not only permitted but encouraged sports and physical enjoyments, which are beneficial to health and do not harm it and it forbade all things that may cause damage or harm to body. The Prophet ^(S.A.W) said: *“Your body has rights over you”*. (Bukhari)²⁸

Islam is concerned with man’s well-being in both body and soul, and it encourages all kinds of sport that will strengthen the body and maintain good health as well as provide relaxation and leisure; such as swimming, shooting, horse-riding, sword-fighting, racing and wrestling etc. If sports are free from things, which are forbidden in *shariah*, then practicing those sports is not wrong. Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) himself participated in certain sports and recommended them to his companions.

Racing

One of the Hadiths mentions the Prophet ^(S.A.W) racing with Aisha (his youngest wife). Aisha said: *“I went out with the Prophet ^(S.A.W) on a journey. At that time, I was a young girl and was quite slender. The Prophet ^(S.A.W) told the people ‘Go on ahead,’ so they went ahead, then he said to me, ‘Come, let us have a race.’ So I raced with him, and I won. He let the matter rest until I had gained weight. Later, I accompanied him on another journey. He told the people, ‘Go on ahead,’ so they went ahead. He said to me, ‘Come, and let us have a race.’ So I raced with him, and he won. He began to laugh, and said, ‘This is for that’”*.²⁹

Horsemanship

Horse riding was one of the foremost requisite of the time. Because the horse was the fastest mode of travelling and used in many ways like war, travel, sports etc, Muhammad ^(S.A.W)

himself was a good horseman. In a *Hadith*, Narrated Anas, “Once the people of Medina were frightened, so the Prophet ^(S.A.W) borrowed a Horse from Abu Talha called Al-Mandub, and rode it. When he came back he said, “We have not seen anything (to be afraid of), but the Horse was very swift”. (Bukhari)³⁰ The above Hadith reflects that Muhammad ^(S.A.W) had extraordinary skill of horse riding, and he could ride an enraged horse easily as well.

Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) also organized horse riding competitions. It is mentioned in some *Ahadith*. Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Umar, “Allah's Apostle ^(S.A.W) ordered for a Horse race; the trained Horses were to run from a place called Al-Hafya' to Thaniyat Al-Wada' and the Horses which were not trained were to run from Al-Thaniya to the Masjid (mosque) of Bani Zuraiq. The sub narrator added: Ibn Umar was one of those who took part in the race”. (Bukhari)³¹

To quote some other *Ahadith* related to Horse riding:

1. Narrated Jabir ibn Abdullah: The Apostle ^(S.A.W) of Allah rode a Horse in Medina. It threw him off at the root of a date-palm. His foot was injured. We visited him to inquire about his illness. We found him praying sitting in the apartment of Aisha. We, therefore, stood, (praying) behind him. He kept silent. We again visited him to inquire about his illness. He offered the obligatory prayer sitting. We, therefore, stood (praying) behind him; he made a sign to us and we sat down. When he finished the prayer, he said: When the imam prays sitting, pray sitting; and when the imam prays standing, pray standing, and do not act as the people of Persia used to act with their chiefs (i.e. the people stood and they were sitting). (Sunan Abu Dawood)³²

2. Narrated Uqbah ibn Amir: I heard the Apostle ^(S.A.W) of Allah say, “Allah, Most High, will cause three persons to enter Paradise for one arrow: the maker when he has a good motive in making it, the one who shoots it, and the one who hands it; so shoot and ride, but your shooting is dearer to me than your

riding. Everything with which a man amuses himself is vain except three (things): a man's training of his Horse, his playing with his wife, and his shooting with his bow and arrow. If anyone abandons archery after becoming an adept through distaste for it, it is a blessing he has abandoned; or he said: for which he has been ungrateful. (Sunan Abu Dawood)³³

3. Narrated Abu Hurayrah: The Prophet (S.A.W) said: Wagers are allowed only for racing camels, or Horses or shooting arrows. (Sunan Abu Dawood)³⁴

4. Narrated Ursa bin Alga: The Prophet (S.A.W) said, "Good will remain (as a permanent quality) in the foreheads of Horses till the Day of Resurrection." And narrated Anas bin Malik: Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) said, "There is a blessing in the fore-heads of Horses". (Bukhari)³⁵

Nezabazi (spear play)

Nezabazi was also among the major sports of that time. Though Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) didn't take part himself in this game, but he used to watch it as audience with his wife Aisha. This means he approved and appreciated it.

1. Narrated 'Aisha: Once I saw Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) at the door of my house while some Ethiopians were playing in the mosque (displaying their skill with spears). Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) was screening me with his Rida' so as to enable me to see their display. ('Urwa said that 'Aisha said, "I saw the Prophet (S.A.W) and the Ethiopians were playing with their lances)". (Bukhari)³⁶

2. Narrated Aisha: Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) came to my house while two girls were singing beside me the songs of Buath (a story about the war between the two tribes of the Ansar, the Khazraj and the Aus, before Islam). The Prophet (S.A.W) lay down and turned his face to the other side. Then Abu Bakr came and spoke to me harshly saying, "Musical instruments of Satan near

the Prophet (S.A.W)?" Allah's Apostle (S.A.W) turned his face towards him and said, "Leave them." When Abu Bakr became inattentive, I signalled to those girls to go out and they left. It was the day of 'Id, and the Black people were playing with shields and spears; so either I requested the Prophet (S.A.W) or he asked me whether I would like to see the display. I replied in the affirmative. Then the Prophet (S.A.W) made me stand behind him and my cheek was touching his cheek and he was saying, "Carry on! O Bani Arfida," till I got tired. The Prophet (S.A.W) asked me, "Are you satisfied (Is that sufficient for you)?" I replied in the affirmative and he told me you can leave. (Bukhari)³⁷

3. *Narrated Abu Huraira: While some Ethiopians were playing (lance fighting) in the presence of the Prophet (S.A.W), 'Umar came in, picked up a stone and hit them with it. On that the Prophet (S.A.W) said, "O 'Umar! Allow them (to play)." Ma'mar (the sub-narrator) added that they were playing in the Mosque. (Bukhari)³⁸*

Swimming

Swimming is a beneficial sport and Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companions enjoyed themselves in it. *Once when Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was swimming in a pond with his companions, he distributed all the members in pairs and asked everyone to swim with his companion. Abu Bakar was paired with Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). (Mishkat al-Masabeeh)³⁹*

In another Hadith, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said, teach your children swimming and archery. (Muslim)⁴⁰

Wrestling

It is an amazing fact that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) himself was a good wrestler. However, he did not participate much in it, but he used it as a medium of Islamic *Dawah*.

Narrated Ali ibn Rukanah: Ali quoting his father said: *Rukanah wrestled with the Prophet (S.A.W) and the Prophet (S.A.W) threw him on the ground.* (Sunan Abu Dawood)⁴¹

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) also organised competitions of wrestling among children. In the battle of Uhud Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) allowed Samrah to prove his claim of being competent to fight by wrestling with Rafe. *Sahabah* also had fine skills of wrestling. Umar bin Al-Khattab and Khalid bin Waleed were well known wrestlers. However, it was the type of wrestling in which one has to floor his opponent, unlike the present WWE style. It is not allowed in Islam to harm anyone even in game, by hitting on face or other parts of the body. In the above *Hadith* one can see easily that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) did not hit Rukana, but only threw him on the ground.

Archery

Archery is one of the most recommended sports in Prophetic traditions because it was a very useful weapon for defense at the time of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Many times Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) advised his companions to participate in archery, and even he warned those who neglect it.

Narrated Uqbah ibn Amir, I heard the Apostle (S.A.W) of Allah said, *“If anyone abandons archery after becoming an adept through distaste for it, it is a blessing he has abandoned; or he said: for which he has been ungrateful”.* (Sunan Abu Dawood)⁴²

In another *Hadith*, it has been reported by Abd al-Rahman b. Shamasa that Fuqaim al- Lakhmi said to Uqba bin Amir, *“The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said, “Who learnt archery and then gave it up is not from us. On the other hand, he has been guilty of disobedience.* (Muslim)⁴³

Hunting

Islam permits hunting but with some limitations. At that time hunting was a major source of earning livelihood; therefore Islam permitted it. However these days when hunting is no longer a profession but only a means of entertainment and since wildlife is decreasing rapidly due to human interference in the nature, it is worthless to kill innocent animals for the sake of enjoyment only. Therefore it is not recommended to hunt. Nevertheless hunting is permitted in Islam and it is not a sin. Therefore, we are quoting a Prophetic tradition related to hunting.

Abu Tha'laba al-Khushani reported: I came to Allah's Messenger ^(S.A.W) and said: O Allah's Messenger ^(S.A.W), we are in the land of the People of the Book, (so) we eat in their utensils, and (live) in a hunting region. Where I hunt with, the help of my bow, and hunt with my trained dog, or with my dog which is not trained. So inform me what lawful (Halal) is for us out of that. He (the Holy Prophet ^(S.A.W)) said: Regarding what you have mentioned of the fact that you live in the land belonging to the People of the Book and so you eat in their utensils, but if you can get utensils other than theirs, then don't eat in them; but if you do not find any, then wash them and eat in them. And regarding what you have mentioned about (your living) in a hunting region, what you hunt, (strike) with the help of your bow, recite the name of Allah (while shooting an arrow) and then eat; and what you catch with the help of your trained dog, recite the name of Allah (while letting oil) the dog and then eat it, and what you get with the help of your untrained dog, (if you find it alive) and slaughter it (according to the law of the Shari'ah), eat it. (Muslim)⁴⁴

Islam allows the hunting only for the purpose of food and skin. If anyone hunts an animal which could not use for eating or skin, than it is unlawful.

Islamic reforms and guidelines to sports and recreation

Islam not only permits but encourages recreation and sports with certain laws and morals. It is a famous saying of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) that, '*a strong momin is better than a weak one*'. (Muslim)⁴⁵ Scholars interpret the word 'strong' as healthy. However, he reformed the unlawful sports and recreations of pre-Islamic Arabia.

1. He prohibited sports in which any living being was harmed.

2. In pre-Islamic Arabia there was an game in which many camels collectively ran long distances until the last one survived. Muhammad (S.A.W) discouraged this game.

3. The Prophet (S.A.W) prohibited from playing games in which archers targeted a living creature for training archery. Ibn 'Umar happened to pass by a party of men who had tied a hen and were shooting arrows at it. When they saw Ibn 'Umar coming, they scampered off. Ibn 'Umar angrily remarked: 'Who has done this? Verily! Allah's Messenger (S.A.W) has invoked a curse upon those who do this kind of things. (Bukhari)⁴⁶ In another *Hadith*, Allah's Messenger (S.A.W) forbade eating a *mujaththema*.⁴⁷

4. In addition, he prohibited the organisation of unnecessary fights between animals. Like, cock fighting, lamb fighting etc. in which animals were harmed severely.

5. He also prohibited betting in sports and declared betting a punishable sin.

6. It is also not permitted for both men and women to devote too much time in watching sports which hinders other necessary jobs.

7. He allowed wrestling only when one floors his opponent without harming his body.

8. Islam prohibits sports of women in public.
9. It also prohibits mixed gender sports.
10. Islam prohibits consumption of alcohol for recreation purposes.
11. Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) allowed music and singing but only in case when singer girls are of below adult age or the singer will be a *mehram*.
12. Also, the content of the poetry must not be romantic, or teasing to anyone.
13. It is also disliked in Islam to consume too much time in recreation and sports because these things are only for refreshment and health and not the aim of life. A *momin* should mostly devote his time in constructive works and to worship his lord.
14. In supporting a team, hooliganism should be avoided. Also, there is no place for gloating. Having an upper hand in games does not want jeering at a defeated opponent. Islam views sports as a means of enhancing mutual love and cooperation among people, not a means of hurting feelings. That's why the winning party should never be carried away with joy to the extent of insulting the opponents, nor must the defeated party be eaten up with envy at his counterpart's advantage. He must keep in mind that his today's loss will pave way for his tomorrow success, if he keeps patience and tries to improve himself. This reminds us of the occasion when a nomad's camel outpaced the Prophet's she-camel which was known to be ever-first in racing, Muslims felt sad. Commenting on the issue, the Prophet ^(S.A.W) said: "*Almighty Allah has decreed that nothing shall have a permanent glory* (meaning that every situation has its ups and downs and no condition is permanent)." The Prophet ^(S.A.W), made this statement to cool down the feelings of Muslims.
15. A Muslim is not permitted to give himself loose rein in practicing sports in a way that involves inflicting harm on

others. Practicing sports in crowded streets, causing traffic jams is not an Islamic way for example.

16. While practicing sports there should be no room for foul words, bad behaviour and slandering.

Challenges to a Muslim sportsman

From the above discussion it is cleared that, Islam has given due importance to sports and entertainment. Islam is a religion of nature therefore; it does not ignore any natural human requirement. There is no harm if a person entertains himself to relax his mind or refresh himself with some permissible sports. Many new sports and games have been introduced in the modern age. However there are some challenges before a Muslim sportsman to participate in. We are highlighting some of them in brief.

- The greatest challenge for a Muslim sportsman to participate in modern day sports is to maintain *Satr* norms of Islam. *Satr* or *Awrah*, are terms used, which denotes the intimate parts of the body, for both men and women, which must be covered with clothing. Exposing the *awrah* is unlawful in Islam and is regarded as sin. It is mandatory to cover from the bellybutton to just below the knees for men in any situation. For women, from the navel to just below the knees while in the presence of the same sex.⁴⁸ While in the presence of the opposite sex other than her marital spouse, woman should cover her whole body excluding face, hands to wrist and legs to ankles. Maintaining *Satr* norms is the greatest challenge for Muslims especially for women while participating in sports, because most of the modern-day sports costumes do not meet the *satr* criteria.
- Another great challenge faced by Muslim sportsman is time consumption. However, Islam discourages too much time consumption in sports and recreation, because at the time of

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) sports were not introduced as profession. Now the purpose of sports increased to a great extent. These days' sports become an industry and participating in sports is a glamorous profession and earns a lot. Therefore, it could be permissible to devote more time in sports if a man chooses it as a profession.

- The third issue is taking reward for games. As discussed above sports are a good means of earning. So if a man takes reward whether in terms of wages or prizes it is *halal* if he participates faithfully in permissible sports under Islamic norms. However, it is severely prohibited to involve in any unlawful activity like betting or match fixing. Rewards earned by these unlawful means, will be *Haram*.
- Watching Sport is also a point to consider here. Islam permits watching sports. However, watching sports in stadiums are not advisable places for Muslims in general, because of the language, drinking and scenery. Allah has commanded the Muslims to lower their gaze, and sport comes as no exception, especially with guys and girls in shorts. However if these conditions do not prevail they can watch sports.
- Another great issue for Muslim women participating is sports, that none of sports is permissible if *non-mehram* or strange males are watching them. According to Islam chastity and modesty is the greatest virtue of a woman. Islam discourages all activities which harm the modesty of a woman and cause distrust in marital relationship. Therefore, in every sport wither it is indoor or outdoor, Muslim woman must play where only women or her *mehran* (her household males) can watch her. Because by watching a playing women cause attraction to opposite sex, which could be resulted to bad consequences. Likewise, in gyms. Although many *women-only gyms* have become popular these days, they were better options for Muslim women.

Islamization of sports

Islamic Solidarity games

As discussed above sports became an industry. Millions of dollars being spent on sports and many rich countries organize national and international tournaments of various sports. Olympic Games are the biggest one. However there were great challenges to Muslim sportsmen and countries to follow the modern standards. Some of these challenges have been discussed above. However, recently some efforts have been made for the Islamization of sports. Islamic Solidarity games are one of a great effort of introducing Islamic sports with modern standards. The Organization of the Islamic Conference established the Islamic Solidarity Games. The first Games were held in 1980 in İzmir, Turkey⁴⁹ and included both men's and women's track-and-field events with participation from nine countries and one unofficial country (Algeria, Bahrain, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus). The next Games were held in Saudi Arabia in 1983.

Most recently, the Islamic Solidarity Games were held in 2005 in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

A great achievement made by Muslim athletic is the men's Super Heavyweight Class in weightlifting (at present, the 105+ kg category). A perennial favorite among spectators, it is currently dominated by Iranian Hossein Reza Zadeh who first set a world record at the world championship and another athlete Reza Zadeh won gold medal at the 2000 Summer Olympics. Then he has broken his own records on a number of occasions, including at the 2004 Athens Games, where he captured his second Olympic gold medal.

Islamization of women sports

Islamic women sports appear to be a contradiction in terms at least what many people in the West believe. The conviction that women in Islamic countries either cannot, will not, or may not take part in sports (or at least in competitive sports) is partly borne out of the fact that Muslim immigrants, especially women, scarcely take any active part in sports.

In the Olympic Games, for example, where nearly half of the participants are female, women from Islamic countries are a small, nearly invisible. But there are exceptions. There is Nawal El Moutawakel, a Moroccan hurdler who won the women's 400-meter event at the 1984 Summer Olympics, or Hassiba Boulmerka who won an Olympic gold medal in the 1500-meter run in 1992. When she later returned to Algeria, she was hailed as a national heroine. Beside all some institutions started organizing women Islamic sports. We can call it as Islamization of women sports.

The '**Women's Islamic Games**' were foremost among the efforts of Islamization of women sports. The Women's Islamic Games is an international multi-sport event started in 1993. The event is organized by the Islamic Federation of Women's Sport (IFWS).⁵⁰ The event has been held in 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005 in Iran and will be held in 2010 in what will be the newly built Azadiye Stadium. Muslim women of all nationalities are allowed to take part in the Games. Muslim women athletes faced difficulties as a result of the conflict between their desire to compete and their religious beliefs. The Women Sports Solidarity Council (Federation of Islamic women's sports) was formed, following an agreement between Faezah Hashemi, International Olympic Committee President (IOC), Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah Alfhhd, and Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani. The Federation of Islamic women's sports

works within the framework of the Olympic Charter, with the aim of holding Olympic sports events while preserving Islamic principles and standards. It aims to strengthen solidarity among Muslim women and the Islamic identity, promote excellence in women's sports, reject racial and class discrimination in accordance with Islam, promote sporting culture, and form educational courses in various disciplines working in the program.

Islamization of sports costumes

Today mostly the modern sports costumes do not fulfil the criterion of *satr*. That is why, for Muslim women, going to the pool or beach is difficult because of Islamic *satr* norms.

However recently some brands introduced sports costumes in some sports which fulfill the *satr* criterion. For instance, an Indonesian Muslim apparel brand; 'Zehba Fashion Wears', developed new full-body swimsuits for women. The brand provides a variety of full-body swimwear. These swim wears developed for Muslim women who want to enjoy swimming with fulfilling the *awrah* norms and do not want to expose *satr* during swimming. These suits made up of polyester; nylon and Lycra material allows for flexible movement in the water and does not stick to the woman's body when she exits the ocean or pool.

Most Muslim women purchase three-piece suits, according to Zehba workers. The suits now being made are increasingly fashionable. In Muslim countries like Indonesia and Malaysia their demand increasing rapidly. For Muslim women, these suits offer the only alternative to wearing regular clothes when swimming. Today, about a dozen stores, based in the United States and abroad, sell these swim wears to Muslim-American women, mostly through online catalogs. In the past, religious women in Turkey either did not go to the beach or wore regular clothing into the water. In Egypt swim suites for Muslim women is better known as "*Shariah* swimsuit". It is a part of

growing industry catering for religiously-observant women. It is no longer confined to westernized elite that can afford such leisure activities as swimming. Muslim women have until now either had to sit on one side or go into the water in their regular clothes. To them, the “*Shariah* swimsuit” offers a new solution. It is a high-necked, swimming costume with sleeves and a small skirt, to be worn over long trousers. Aheda Zanetti, a Lebanese Australian sells her *Burqinis* (*Burkha* + *Bikini* = *Burkini*) and hopes to widen the garment’s demand among Muslim women at beaches. These are some glimpses of the development of Islamic sports costumes for Muslim women divers to enjoy swimming with fulfilling Islamic norms of *Aurah*. Ruqayya al-Ghasara of Bahrain proved at the Beijing Olympics that her Muslim attire was not an obstacle”. Ruqayya shot to world fame when she sprinted to the gold medal at the Doha Asian Games in 2006. She was among three Muslim women athletes who wore the Islamic attire in Beijing. Two others were Homa Hosseini of Iran and Shaimaa El-Gammal of Egypt.⁵¹ In other sports also there should be introduced Islamic standard costumes, which provide opportunities for Muslim women to participate in sports, such as tennis, soccer, volleyball, basketball, skating etc.

Conclusion

After all, Islam is not a hindrance for a Muslim sportsman at all, if he seeks to practice Islam with sports as a profession. Recently the cricket team of Pakistan proved it with showing a great interest in practicing Islam. Many of the senior members of the team like Saeed Anwar, Saleem Malik, Shahid Afredi, Inzamamul Haq proved, it is easy to be a good sportsman with firmly practicing faith. Their spiritual character caused a great impact on other players to understand true spirit of Islam. Prophet Muhammad ^(S.A.W) himself used wrestling for Islamic

Dawah to a bodybuilder Rukanah, the related Hadith we have quoted in wrestling section.

It reveals that sports could be a good means of Islamic *Dawah* if the sportsman be a nice Muslim and able to present Islam properly to others.

Notes and references

¹(S.A.W) = Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam

²http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=73&translator=1&start=46&number=46

³http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?cid=1149429765828&pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar%2FFatwaE%2FPrintFatwaE+

⁴http://www.themodernreligion.com/women/w_sport.htm

⁵Ibid.

⁶<http://www.articlesbase.com/track-and-field-articles/the-race-between-prophet-muhammad-and-his-wife-1891378.html>

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²<http://australianmuslim.blogspot.com/2010/03/muhammad-light-of-heart-islamic.html>

¹³http://www.india-forums.com/forum_posts.asp?TID=1138972

¹⁴http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=57&translator=1&start=0&number=92

¹⁵http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=73&translator=1&start=0&number=32

¹⁶http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=73&translator=1&start=0&number=26

¹⁷http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=15&translator=1&start=0&number=70

¹⁸http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=15&translator=1&start=0&number=70

¹⁹http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=73&translator=1&start=0&number=175

²⁰*Mehram* are those family members to whom a woman cannot marry with. Such as Father, Brother, Son, Father-in-law, Husband, Grandfather, Maternal Grandfather, Uncle (Father's brother), Maternal Uncle etc. In other words *Mehram* can be defined as 'Un-Marriageable'. Just vice versa for women.

²¹http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=73&translator=1&start=0&number=166

²²Related by Muslim, Ahmad, Al-Tirmidhi and Al-Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad.

²³http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=8&translator=1&start=0&number=419

²⁴http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=73&translator=1&start=0&number=167

²⁵http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=58&translator=1&start=0&number=181

²⁶http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=54&translator=1&start=0&number=434

²⁷http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=56&translator=1&start=0&number=731

²⁸Bukhari, Kitaab al-Sawm, 1839.

²⁹<http://www.articlesbase.com/track-and-field-articles/the-race-between-prophet-muhammad-and-his-wife-1891378.html#ixzz10w14V6eI>

³⁰http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=47&translator=1&start=0&number=795

³¹http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=8&translator=1&start=0&number=411

³²http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=2&translator=3&start=0&number=0602

³³http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=14&translator=3&start=0&number=2507

³⁴http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=14&translator=3&start=0&number=2568

³⁵http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=52&translator=1&start=0&number=103

³⁶http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=8&translator=1&start=0&number=444

³⁷http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=15&translator=1&start=0&number=70

³⁸http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=52&translator=1&start=0&number=150

³⁹Mishkat al Masaabeeh.(aadab-e-zindagi) or

<http://urduplanet.com/showthread.php?t=5384>

⁴⁰<http://urduplanet.com/showthread.php?t=5384>

⁴¹http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=32&translator=3&start=0&number=4067

⁴²http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=14&translator=3&start=0&number=2507

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/abudawud/014.sat.html#014.2507>

⁴³http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=020&translator=2&start=0&number=4714

⁴⁴http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=021&translator=2&start=0&number=4743

⁴⁵http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=033&translator=2&start=0&number=6441

⁴⁶http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=67&translator=1&start=0&number=423

⁴⁷*Mujaththema*: Flesh cut down from the body of a live animal.

⁴⁸<http://islamicfinancialfreedom.com/HIJAB%20&%20AURA.htm>

⁴⁹<http://www.gbrathletics.com/ic/isg.htm>

⁵⁰<http://www.ifws.org/portal/default.aspx>

⁵¹<http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/news/news.php?article=14798>

Note: Most of the *Ahadith* mentioned in this article are collected from www.searchtruth.com. Therefore we provided URL of every *Hadith* in references. One can easily find a *Hadith* by simply pasting its URL in the address bar.